



HUMANITIES WEST

exploring history to celebrate the mind and the arts since 1983



Baghdad in Its Golden Age (762–1300)

APRIL 25–26, 2014 • MARINES' MEMORIAL THEATRE, 609 SUTTER ST., SAN FRANCISCO

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Baghdad in Its Golden Age (762–1300)

From its founding in 762 as The City of Peace, Baghdad thrived as the political, cultural, religious, and commercial center of the Muslim empire. Abbasid caliphs ruled over diverse populations of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and polytheists, whose ethnic identities ranged from Arab to Persian and Turkish to Berber. All contributed to the brilliance of the greatest city of its time in the Middle East, if not the world. At its House of Wisdom, scholars from across the empire translated into Arabic, synthesized and advanced the fragmented literary and scientific knowledge of ancient Greece, Persia, and India. Chinese paper technology enabled Baghdad bookstores to sell thousands of books a day. Without this chapter in history, the inheritance of antiquity would likely have followed tortured paths to the present. Baghdad's intellectual and cultural influence was extraordinary in its time, and its legacy—and mythologizing—in the west and east continue to this day.

Introductory slide show compliments of Mona Malik (SFSU)

Background music: The Second Baghdad, Rahim AlHaj on the Oud, VoxLox (2002)

Scholars Circle: Professor Cobb's lecture is underwritten by Deborah Sorondo and the performance by HW Milestone patrons.

Friday, April 25, 2014

7:30 pm–9:30 pm

Welcome PATRICIA LUNDBERG (Humanities West) and FRED DONNER, MODERATOR

The Elephant from Baghdad: The City of Peace, the West, and the Golden Age of Islam PAUL M. COBB

Around the year 800 AD, the leader of the Muslim world (Harun al-Rashid of Baghdad), sent an elephant to the leader of the Christian world (Charlemagne of Aachen, in Germany). Whatever for? The various possible answers to that question, it turns out, tell us an awful lot about Islamic civilization in the early Middle Ages,

the glory of Baghdad at its height, and the history of relations between the Islamic world and the West. Using this well-traveled elephant as our guide, then, Professor Cobb explores the foreign yet familiar world of Baghdad in its Golden Age.

Performance: In the Fair Garden— Music for the Golden Age of Baghdad

Gari Hegedus joins Bay Area medieval ensemble *Cançonièr*, featuring Shira Kammen and Tim Rayborn, in a tribute to the achievements of this great city, reflecting its status as a center of learning and culture through the beginning of the 13th century. Using medieval and Middle Eastern instruments, the group presents a concert featuring medieval and traditional instrumental music from Iraq, the larger Arab world, the Eastern Jews, the Armenians, and improvisations.

During the period of the Abbasid Caliphs, Baghdad became an intellectual center for science, philosophy, medicine, and education. The Abbasids championed the cause of knowledge and established the House of Wisdom, where both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars sought to gather and translate the world's knowledge into Arabic.



Welcome PATRICIA LUNDBERG (Humanities West)

Medieval Baghdad: Metropolis and Court; Reading and Writing FRED ASTREN

In 762 the caliph al-Mansur imagined a well-ordered imperial round city, but soon Baghdad thrived as a massively complex urban environ. Then, Islam was a young religion still defining itself; imperial models about Islamic thought were often challenged. One monument of early Islamic culture wars was the Bayt al-Hikma, or House of Wisdom, founded by the caliph al-Ma'mun in a vast movement to translate great writings from the pre-Islamic past into Arabic. Thus began a centuries-long interest in translating from Greek, Syriac, and other languages into Arabic, and later

Persian. Abbasid courtly culture, *adab*, fostered learning about poetry, oratory, grammar, non-Muslim civilizations, and the history of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Accelerating this revolution in literacy advanced by Arabs, Jews, Christians, and others was the paradigm-changing introduction from China of paper. In Abbasid Baghdad we find, in addition to philosophy, law, and literature, the medieval foundations of science, medicine and mathematics constituting intellectual and literary links between the modern world and the distant past.

Intermission

The Thousand and One Nights: The Facts of its Fiction MARGARET LARKIN

The well-known collection of popular stories known as *The Thousand and One Nights*, most famously associated with Harun al-Rashid and the golden age of Baghdad, is a composite work that blends the inherited tales of India and Persia with the indigenous story and textual traditions of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. Long denigrated in elite Arabic literary circles because of its linguistic register and sometimes less-than-exalted content, the *Nights'* story of

evolution into a recognized staple of the Arabic literary heritage is itself a complicated tale worthy of this adventure-filled text. An examination of that journey to the work's current position in Arabic and world literature, as well as its treatment at the hands of a diversely-motivated cast of translators and adapters, forms the necessary basis for our excursion into the story cycles that make up the text of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Lunch Break Program resumes at 1:30 pm.

Art and Architecture during the Golden Age of Islam PATRICIA BLESSING

This lecture discusses the arts and architecture of Islam during the Abbasid period, beginning with the foundation of Baghdad in 762 to the Mongol conquest of the city in 1258. This trajectory will show the capitals of the Abbasid caliphs, Raqqa, Baghdad, and Samarra; the ceramics and rich stucco decoration that were produced in the latter city; book paintings that emerged in the Iraqi city of Wasit in the early 13th century; and illustrations of the

Mongol conquest of Baghdad in late 13th-century manuscripts. The lecture will explore these different places and their cultures, from court life to entertaining literature, from medical manuscripts to animal motifs on ceramics. This will provide an overview of the rich Islamicare cultures in the medieval Mediterranean, with a focus on today's Iraq, yet reaching beyond this central region of the Abbasid realm.

Intermission

Baghdad: The City of Wisdom (750–1300) ALI YAYCIOĞLU

The Abbasid elites created Baghdad in 762, not only as a political but also as an intellectual center of the Islamic Empire, superseding earlier centers of Islamic expansion at Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and Damascus. Baghdad's round shape was seen as the manifestation of the new Islamic cosmology, and the Abbasid court became the primary patron of the wise men who fostered Islamic philosophy and Arabic literature. The new cosmology of Islam in the 8th and 9th centuries was materialized in a newly designed

urban space, and the vibrant intellectual life and court politics of Baghdad shaped what was later called the Golden Age of Islam. Baghdad survived as one of the cultural centers of the Islamic world until the Mongol conquest in 1258 caused its destruction and marginalization in the Islamic world. However, the image of Baghdad as the city of wisdom continued to shape the collective memory of the Muslim cultural world throughout centuries.

Panel Discussion with Presenters; Fred Donner, Moderator. Written questions from the Audience.

To pose questions to the Presenters please fill out a card and leave it on the lobby table.

Special Offer

Humanities West has produced a special edition educational resource/reader for *Baghdad in Its Golden Age*. It is free to attendees in PDF format via email at cynthia@humanitieswest.org. A Resource List is available at humanitieswest.org.



Fred Astren (PhD, Near Eastern Studies, UC Berkeley) is Professor and Chair of Jewish Studies at San Francisco State University. He holds a B.E.S. degree from University of Minnesota with specialization in medieval history and an MA in Arabic from UC Berkeley. Areas of research include minority/sectarian history and sacred history in the Mediterranean Middle Ages, with special focus on Jewish history under Islam, Jewish-Muslim relations, and the Karaite Jewish sect. Astren is writing a book on Jews in the Mediterranean of the early Middle Ages.



Patricia Blessing (PhD, Art and Archeology, Princeton) studies the art and architecture of the Islamic world, focusing on trans-cultural interactions in the Middle Ages. Her dissertation, *Reframing the Lands of Rûm—Architecture and Style in Eastern Anatolia (1240–1320 CE)* investigates relationships among patronage, architecture, and style, paying close attention to mobility fostered by trans-imperial networks from Anatolia to Central Asia. She has excavated in Syria, Uzbekistan, and Turkey. She completed her undergraduate work in Near Eastern Studies, art history, and comparative literature in Geneva (Switzerland) and Bamberg (Germany) and earned her MA from Princeton. At Stanford, Blessing works at the Humanities Center. She teaches courses on medieval history and on Islamic art and architecture.



Paul M. Cobb (PhD, University of Chicago) is Professor of Islamic History at University of Pennsylvania. He has lived in and traveled widely throughout Europe and the Middle East. He is a social and cultural historian of the medieval Islamic world, and, in particular of Islam's relationship with the medieval West. He is the author or editor of many publications, including, *White Banners: Contention in Abbasid Syria* (2001), *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades* (2008), and *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (2012).



Fred M. Donner (PhD, Princeton) is Professor of Near Eastern History at the University of Chicago. Earlier he studied Arabic in Lebanon and Oriental

Philology at the University of Erlangen, Germany and taught at Yale prior to moving to U of C. His books include *The Early Islamic Conquests* (1981), *Narratives of Islamic Origins* (1997), and *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (2010). He has translated the medieval Arabic chronicle of al-Tabari (1993), written over 40 scholarly articles, and has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. He has served as President of the Middle East Studies Association of North America, and in 2008 he received MESA's Jere L. Bacharach Award for Service to the Profession of Middle Eastern Studies.



Gari Hegedus plays oud, saz, violin, and a range of stringed instruments from Greece and Turkey. His repertoire and playing styles reach as far as the Arab lands, Iran, and India. He has studied with oud master Naseer Shamma and has recorded and performed with Ross Daly. Hegedus is affiliated with Stellamara, Teslim, Janam, Helladellics, Eliyahu and the Qadim Ensemble, and Hamed Nikpay.



Created by multi-instrumentalist Tim Rayborn and recorder virtuoso Annette Bauer, the group **Cançonier** features for this performance the talents of Humanities West favorites **Tim Rayborn** and **Shira Kammen**. Founded in 2008, Cançonier has established itself as a distinguished medieval ensemble, well-known for its innovative programs with unusual subjects. The group has performed at a number of noted early music series around the country, and its recording "The Black Dragon—Music from the Time of Vlad Dracula," has been called "exquisite" by *Early Music America*, and "mesmerizing" by *Fanfare*.



Margaret Larkin (PhD, Columbia) is Professor of Arabic Literature and Chair of Near Eastern Studies at UC Berkeley. She works on both classical and modern Arabic literature in literary and colloquial Arabic. Larkin was named the 2010 Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Civilizations at American University in Cairo. She is currently working on a pub-

lication exploring the 10th-century poet, Abu'l-Tayyib al-Mutanabbī, which includes studies on the inter-textual engagement with al-Mutanabbī's poetry by successive generations of Arab poets. Selected publications include *Al-Mutanabbī: Voice of the 'Abbasid Poetic Ideal* (2008); "Al-Jurjani" in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (2005); and *The Theology of Meaning: Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani's Theory of Discourse* (1995).



Ali Yaycioğlu (PhD, History and Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard) is Assistant Professor of History at Stanford. He was born and grew up in Ankara Turkey, where he completed his BS in International Relations at Middle East Technical University. He studied Ottoman History at Bilkent University and Islamic History at McGill University. He did postdoctoral study in Hellenic Studies at Princeton. His main research interest is the Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire. His forthcoming book is *Partners of the Empire: The Rise of Provincial Notables and the Crisis of the Ottoman Order (1700–1820)*. His teaching focuses on the early modern Middle East and Southeast Europe, and the history of the Ottoman Empire. His teaching interests span history of the broader Islamic World; empires, markets and networks in global context of the early modern period; and memory studies.



Nicholas Al-Jeloo (PhD, Syriac Studies, Sydney) is an Australian-born Assyrian and an independent researcher. He holds an MA in Eastern Christianity from Leiden University, and a BA in Classical Hebrew from University of Sydney. He works on classical Syriac and modern Aramaic literature, ethno-religious and linguistic minorities, and the social and cultural history of ethnic Assyrians in the medieval and modern periods. He has conducted fieldwork across the Middle East. Al-Jeloo has taught Syriac at University of Sydney. His publications include *Modern Aramaic (Assyrian/Syriac) Dictionary and Phrasebook* (2007) and the exhibit catalogue *Persistence and Existence* (2010). He is writing a book on Assyrians in Iran during the pre-modern and early modern periods. He lectured for Humanities West on April 24 at the Commonwealth Club.

September 19, 2014 From Haydn to Schoenfield: Rockin' the Sonata with the Saint Michael Trio. Music at its most fun! Both Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) and Paul Schoenfield (1947–) are highly formal in their sonata form. Yet Haydn's classical sonatas embodied the formalism of the 18th-century Enlightenment, while Detroit native Paul Schoenfield's "Cafe Music" (1987) expresses the whimsy and energy of a 21st-century urban metropolis. **Daniel Cher** (violin), **Michel Flexer** (cello), and **Russell Hancock** (piano, lecturer)—The Saint Michael Trio—demonstrate through illustrated lecture and performance how two utterly different composers express the sentiment of their age. An antidote to the staid world of classical music, the artists earn glowing praise for making their "informances" interesting, accessible, and oftentimes funny.



October 24–25, 2014 The Roman Republic (509–27 BCE) From its legendary origins as a tiny cluster of villages in the Italian countryside, ancient Rome grew into a vast metropolis and the dominant power of the Mediterranean. Leaders of the Roman Republic established a constitutional framework that embodied principles of separation of powers, checks and balances, and the rights and duties of citizenship (for some), a model that endured for centuries. Ultimately civil strife exacerbated by wide disparities in social and economic well-being and the strains of governing a far-flung empire doomed Cicero's Republican Rome in the first century BCE. From its modeling of democratic values to its golden age of drama and its Greek- and Etruscan-inspired art, the Roman Republic was a major turning point in western civilization that inspires us to this day.

February 27–28, 2015 Charlemagne: The Father of Western Europe Even 1,200 years after his death in 814, Charlemagne still symbolizes a critical turning point in Western civilization. King of the Franks and Lombards, Emperor of a New Rome, Charles the Great ushered in the Carolingian Renaissance and fathered a dynasty. Although political unity proved ephemeral, his economic, administrative, educational, and religious reforms created a new and enduring cultural identity that encompassed the heartland of today's Western Europe. For the first time, the focus of European political power shifted from the Mediterranean, then dominated by Byzantine and Islamic empires, to continental (and Catholic) Europe.



May 1–2, 2015 The Great War: Cultural Reverberations Across Europe The First World War collapsed empires, redrew national boundaries, caused cataclysmic change in a generation of Europeans, and revolutionized long-held world views all across Europe. From 1914–18, "The Great War" raged amid a vast crisis of cultural confidence. The war to end all wars was a monumental catastrophe, one of history's major turning points. Yet among The Great War's legacies of drastic political, social, and cultural change has been its indelible influence on music, art, literature, and film.



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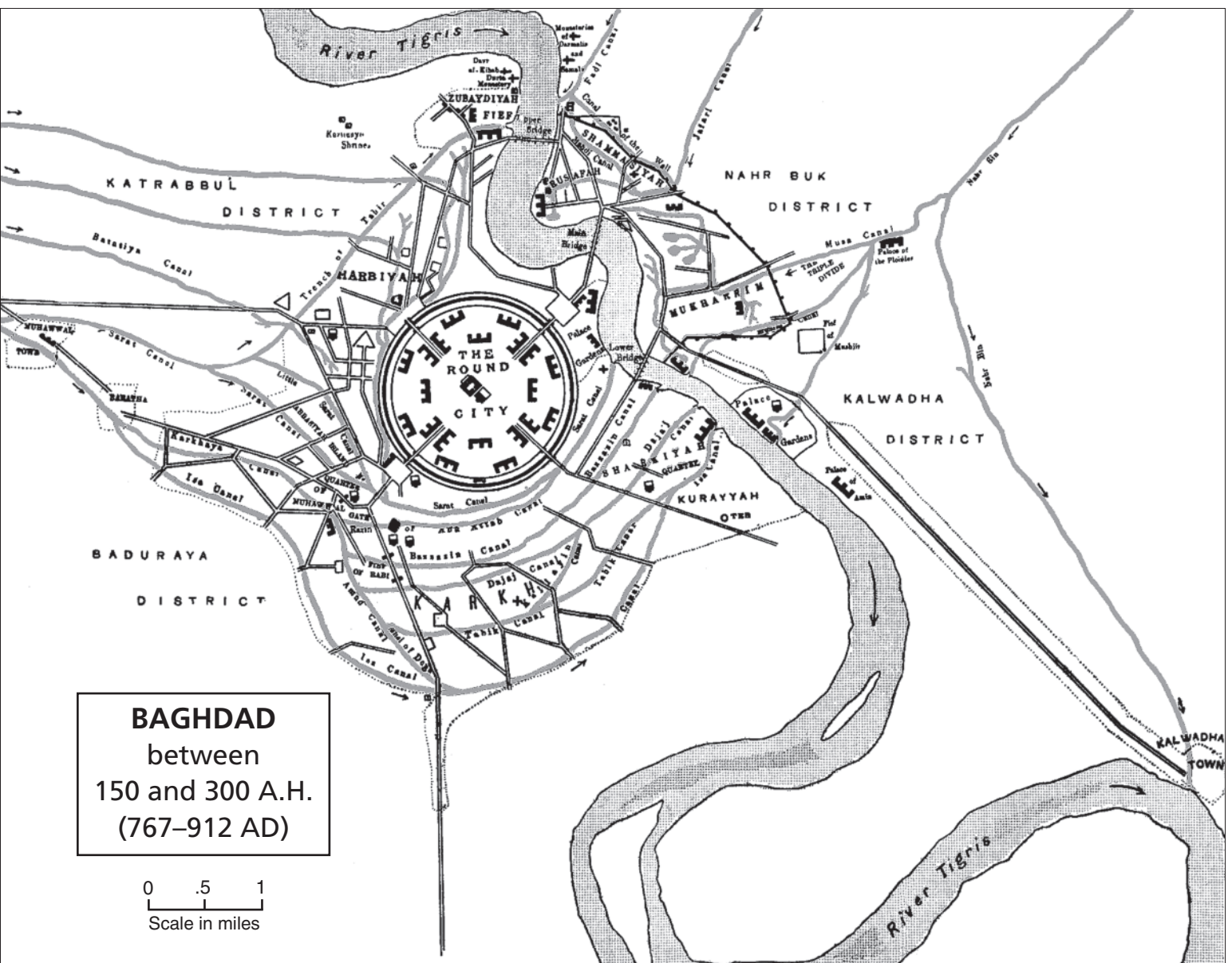
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Baghdad in Its Golden Age (762–1300)

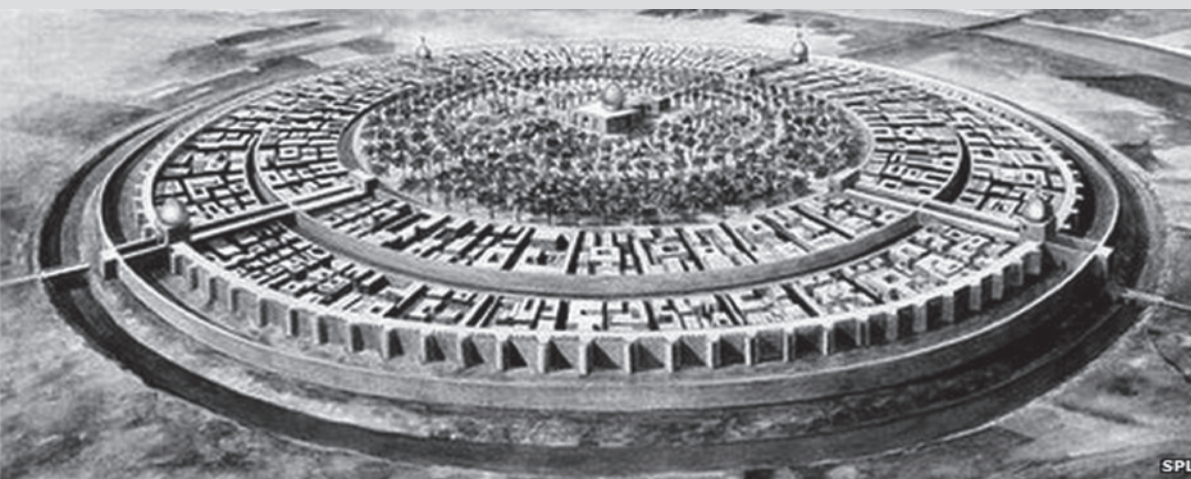
Significant Events

Thanks to *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization* by Jonathan Lyons, (2010), editor and foreign correspondent in the Muslim world for Reuters for more than 20 years, now affiliated with the Global Terrorism Research Center at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Some of the important events surrounding the story of The House of Wisdom:

- 622 Prophet Muhammad (570–632) leads a migration of his followers from Mecca to Medina, the *hijra*. It marks the start of the Muslim epoch and the Islamic lunar calendar.
- 632 The death of Muhammad.
- 644-56 Under Caliph Uthman, the text of the Qur'an is standardized and is the standard today.
- 691 The Dome of the Rock, the first major artistic endeavor of the Umayyad dynasty (661–750) is completed under Caliph Abd al-Malik, in Jerusalem.
- 732 An Arab raiding party is defeated near Tours, in southern France, effectively ending Muslim penetration of Western Europe from Spain.
- 750 The victory of the Abbasid revolution against the Umayyad Caliphs. Abbasids rule until 1258. Caliph capital is transferred from Syria to Baghdad.
- 756 Abd al-Rahman proclaims himself master of Muslim Spain, known as al-Andalus.
- 762 Caliph al-Mansur founds Baghdad as the new Abbasid capital.
- 771 Hindu sages bring Sanskrit scientific texts to Baghdad.
- 800 Muslim merchants reach China (Canton). Foundation of a paper factory in Baghdad; the first in history outside China. The Muslims use different materials from the Chinese, though. This is a development that would subsequently revolutionize learning. The paper industry spreads from Baghdad, to Syria and further West, until it reaches about a century later Europe (Spain) via Morocco.
- 810 Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) founded in Baghdad.
- 813–833 The reign of Caliph al-Mamun, an enthusiastic promoter of science and philosophy.
 - 825 Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi produces his famous star tables, the *zij al-Sindhind*.
 - 848 Albumazar (Abu Mashar) completes *The Introduction to Astrology* in Baghdad.
 - 948 Byzantines send Dioscorides's medical encyclopedia to the Arab court of Cordoba.
- 1080 Adelard of Bath is born. Leaves Bath for Tours ca. 1100, heads for the east in 1109 in pursuit of Arab learning.
- 1258 Sack of Baghdad by Mongol Hulagu Khan and end of Abbasid rule.
- 1256–1335 Ilkhanate Mongols in Iraq.



Map by William Muir (1819-1905) in 1883. Source: Wikipedia



Baghdad was the capital of the Islamic Empire ruled by the Abbasid Caliphate. 10th-century Baghdad was 2.5 miles in diameter with four gates protected by a moat and a double circular enclosure. The palace, mosque, and barracks were in the center, while the town was a ring between the two walls.



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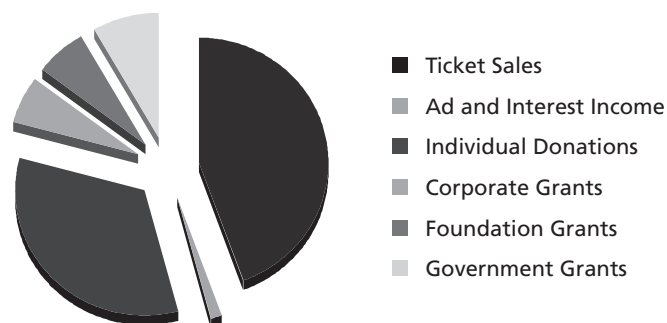
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April 30, 2014 at 5:30 pm

Humanities West Book Discussion

Led by Lynn Harris

The Caliph's Splendor: Islam and the West in the Golden Age of Baghdad
by Benson Bobrick (2012)

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OCTOBER 1–12, 2015

**The Great War: A Journey into
the Archeology of World War I**

The immense sacrifices made by troops from all over the world during the great cataclysm of World War I left behind an indelible mark on the countryside of northern France and Belgium. The archaeological remains of the conflict embody the personal stories and intimate details bound up in the tragedy and horror of the Great War. This tour journeys along the Western Front, from the early battles around the Belgian town of Ypres to the endgame of the War close to Verdun. Through visits to archaeological excavations, cemeteries and memorials, as well as journeys across the now peaceful battlefields, this tour provides an opportunity to understand the magnitude of this terrible conflict—and the great debt we owe to all those who fought in it.

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Please visit the Humanities West travel page at www.humanitieswest.org for details.
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An historical landmark built in 1926, the Marines' Memorial Theatre is an intimate 564-seat jewel box theatre in the heart of San Francisco's theatre district between Union Square and Nob Hill. The theatre is a well-known resource for local corporate and civic groups along with charitable organizations. In addition to acclaimed live performances, the Marines' Memorial Theatre is also a venue for speakers, presentations, corporate events, celebrations and more. The non-profit Marines' Memorial Theatre proudly presents live theatrical performances as well as inspiring speakers and presentations.



Late Seating Performances begin promptly. Seating for late-comers is at the discretion of the theatre management and production staff. The lobby bar opens 60 minutes before the program and seating opens 30 minutes before the program. The theatre box office and orchestra entrance are located on the second floor, accessible by elevators from the hotel lobby. Accessible restrooms are in the theatre lobby and on floor 10. Thank you for arriving early.

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Ages Every person entering the theatre must have a ticket. Babies-in-arms and children younger than five years old are not allowed.

Accessibility Please contact City Box Office directly at 415.392.4400 to purchase wheelchair accessible seating, or if you have other special needs. Wheelchair locations cannot be purchased online and are reserved for patrons who will be staying in their wheelchairs. Please contact the box office if you plan on coming to the theatre in a wheelchair and wish to transfer to a regular theatre seat, as we can help you select an appropriate seat location. There is no elevator access to balcony seating. The theatre box office and orchestra entrance are located on the second floor. Please enter the hotel lobby and take the center or right-hand elevator for access to the second floor. The left-hand elevator does not stop at the theatre. Accessible restrooms are located off the orchestra-level lobby and also on floor 10M.

Recording Equipment No recording devices are permitted in the theatre.

Listening Assistance A Listening Assistance System is installed at the theatre. Headphones are available from the theatre box office. There is no charge, but an ID deposit is required.

MARINES' MEMORIAL THEATRE
History. The Arts. Music. Events.

609 Sutter Street, 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94102
Office: 415-447-0188
Fax: 415-447-0198
www.marinesmemorialtheatre.com
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MARINES' MEMORIAL THEATRE

Theatre Manager

Diane Myrick

Technical Director

Greg Wilson

Front of House Manager

Brandie Pilapil

Front of House Staff

Tony Bermudez, Ron Marshall,
Brian Herman, and Claire Gerndt

PATRONS, ATTENTION PLEASE! FIRE NOTICE:

THERE ARE SUFFICIENT EXITS IN THIS BUILDING TO ACCOMMODATE THE ENTIRE AUDIENCE. THE EXIT INDICATED BY THE LIGHTED "EXIT" SIGN NEAREST YOUR SEAT IS THE SHORTEST ROUTE TO THE STREET. IN CASE OF FIRE, PLEASE **DO NOT RUN** — WALK THROUGH THAT EXIT.

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